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MRS. HOODLESS . .
On Domestic Science

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Including a recent visit to the Schools of
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REPORT OF MRS. HOODLESS

ON

DOMESTIC SCIENCE

Including a recent visit to the Schools of Philadelphia and Washington.

There is no branch of educational development receiving greater attention in the schools of Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and the United States, than that of manual training, and no feature of manual training is receiving so much attention as that of domestic science. It has become a recognized fact that the principles of education must be applied to the management of the home and of children. The introduction of this practical subject has proved of value not only to the nation at large, through a development of a higher ideal of home life ; but by enabling head and hand to work together, it has been accepted as a powerful factor in mental development.

A few extracts from reports recently published may help to convince the sceptical that these conclusions have not been arrived at without careful investigation and experiment.

The Royal Commission of England on Elementary Education in its report for 1887 laid down the principle "that the true object of education is to give such instruction to the scholars as will best fit them to fulfil the ordinary duties of the life to which they are most likely to be called." This led to much discussion, and as it was generally conceded that the duty most likely to devolve upon the great majority of girls attending the schools would be in some form of domestic life, it was decided to introduce domestic science into the regular elementary and secondary school courses. The popularity of the subject may be shown by the following statistics: "During the first year in which the Education Department included it in the code the number of girls who received instruction qualifying for the Government grant (4 shillings per pupil) was 7,597 from 457 schools. In 1896, 134,930 girls received the requisite instruction in 2,729 schools. This enormous increase in the work was watched with much interest by the Education Department. Her Majesty's Inspectors were requested to specially note and report to the Department upon the progress of the subject. The report was as follows : "The cookery classes are doing good work. The experiment is remarkably successful; the girls keenly enjoy their lessons; they are taught to be cleanly, careful and economical, and such teaching is likely to be of permanent value."

This was very encouraging in the face of the difficulty in securing competent teachers for which no special training had been provided. This difficulty, however, has been removed, as there are now several training schools for teachers in England, and a high standard of efficiency is required.

The latest report, 1898, of the Royal Commission on practical and manual instruction in Primary Schools, appointed by the National Board of Education in Ireland, contains much valuable information. The Commission consisted of fourteen educational authorities.

Ninety-three meetings were held, the evidence taken of 186 persons who were considered qualified to give information, and 119 schools were visited where manual and practical training was actually given. These investigations included visits to Belgium, Germany, France, Sweden and the United States.

An extract from the report in reference to the teaching of Domestic Science in Germany will show the value placed upon the subject in that country. "Cookery and Domestic Economy :—This subject has of late been coming very much to the front in connection with primary education. Facilities are now provided for it in most if not all towns, and it is being introduced as an obligatory subject in several important centres such as Cologne and Strasburg. Needlework:—This subject is taught almost universally in Germany and Switzerland. The hours of instruction are from two to five in the week."

The report from Belgium says : "There is no phase of popular education in Belgium more remarkable or more interesting than the development of instruction in household duties for girls."

In summing up, the Commissioners, among many others, make the following recommendations :

" We are of opinion that the general principles and methods of the system known by the name of Kindergarten . . . . should be extended, as far as possible, to all schools attended by infant children."

" We think that Kindergarten methods and principles should be continued in Classes I., II. and III. of ordinary schools, in the form of paper folding, card board work, wire work, bricklaying, clay modelling, and such like manual exercises."

Domestic Science.—"The evidence we have had in reference to cookery shows the attractiveness of the subject to the pupils, and its usefulness in securing greater regularity of attendance, and in encouraging the pupils to stay on longer at school. We are of opinion that this useful subject should be encouraged in the schools. We consider that the teaching of this subject should be continuous, not in the sense that it should be taught every day, but that it should be taught in one or more classes each week throughout the school year, ... that it must be made to aid the general course of education."

Sewing.—" We are satisfied that three hours a week is quite sufficient for instruction in sewing. The proposed introduction of other subjects of practical instruction is an additional reason why less time than at present should be devoted to needlework. There is great danger of needlework becoming mechanical. To guard against this danger special attention should be paid to the educational side of the subject ; the work should be varied, and where possible, frequent demonstrations on the blackboard should be given."

The progress made, together with the apparent educational value placed upon these practical subjects in other countries has led to a consideration of their introduction into the public schools of Ontario.

It is generally conceded, after years of experience, without which an educational system cannot be perfected, that a strictly mental or theoretical training has not produced satisfactory results.

That the brain must be the directing power is, of course, acknowledged ; but mental power without the ability to execute, without the co-operation of eye and hand, is not the kind of education which will " fit scholars for the ordinary duties of life." The more advanced theories in regard to education involve the training of the senses as agents of the mind in acquiring a true knowledge of things.

Familiarity with things can never be given by a study of words alone. The perceptive faculty must be trained. The fact must never be overlooked that the value of these subjects is based upon their aid to mental development. They must not occupy an isolated position in the school curriculum, but must justify their existence as living exponents of abstract principles to the general cause of education. For this reason it has been earnestly recommended, by leaders in the movement, that teachers employed for these subjects should have a general knowledge of the regular school work. The most successful teachers have been those who, in addition to the regular normal course prescribed for public school teachers, have taken a course in a technical school.

In order to study the actual work and methods practised in some of the educational centres of the United States, where conditions and general education are more inline with those of Ontario, visits have been made to schools in New York, Boston, and quite recently to Washington and Philadelphia. Each state and city has its own plan of work, although a marked similarity is apparent. Much depends upon the energy and ability of the superintendent. In Washington a complete system of manual training has been established with most gratifying results. It has been introduced on a strictly educational basis and occupies the same position as the other obligatory subjects. The course for girls is practically the same as that given on a preceding page, which was recommended by the Royal Commission as suitable for Standards I., II. and III., including the Kindergarten. Each class room contains a large collection of seeds, minerals, fossils, etc. Special attention is given to clay modelling, and drawing, which is almost entirely freehand. In the more advanced grades this training is turned to account in drafting and designing garments. The senior grades are allowed one and a half hours a week in the drafting, cutting, fitting and making of these garments, for which special rooms are provided in different sections of the city. One hour a week is given to plain sewing all through the primary grades. In the more advanced grades the pupils are allowed to bring the material for simple garments from home. The method of instruction in this subject leaves no doubt as to the connection between designing and drafting with mathematical precision and drawing. It provides excellent practical training in these two subjects besides developing the artistic and creative faculty. During the sewing course frequent talks are given by the teacher on the manufacture of the various articles in use, such as needles, scissors, thread, cotton, wool, silk, etc. Samples of the raw material and in the various processes of manufacture are provided for each school. In this way the pupils are given a knowledge of good and bad material. The lessons are intensely interesting and make a pleasant change from book work. This variety of occupation has resulted in better order in the schools, more regular attendance, increased interest and prolonged attendance at school. The older girls are anxious to reach the cutting and fitting room, and the domestic science classes. (See Philadelphia report.) Fifteen regular teachers of sewing are employed in the Washington schools, each having charge of a district and devoting one hour a week to the primary classes, and one and a half hours to those of the senior grade. The domestic science department is in charge of twelve regular instructors.

The necessary expenses for material, etc., are paid from the regular school appropriation for industrial instruction.

The sewing course in the Philadelphia schools is very similar to that followed in Washington, with the exception that drafting and cutting on paper patterns is carried through the whole course, which begins with the third school year, and all the work is done in the regular class-room. There are forty-one instructors of sewing in the Philadelphia schools under the charge of a supervisor. The teachers use the blackboard very freely, and through questions and answers enable the pupil to understand the underlying principles of all needlework. In many schools the boys take sewing and are among the brightest pupils. Six cents per annum is allowed for each child engaged in sewing.

Domestic Science.—Domestic Science forms part of the general education for girls in nearly all the leading cities and towns in the United States, as in Europe. It has gone beyond the experimental stage, and is being rapidly introduced into the high schools and colleges. While the subject is frequently considered in connection with the primary schools, under the head of cookery it must not be inferred that cooking in the sense of pleasing the palate, and the ability to prepare new and elaborate dishes, is the ultimate object of such teaching. On the contrary, it is based upon scientific, hygienic and health principles.

Economy, cleanliness, method, promptness and development of executive ability are the primary objects. With the co-ordination of other subjects it brings mental application to the daily duties which must result in producing a higher type of home life and physical perfection.

There is no greater factor in promoting the welfare of a nation than its home life, therefore it is worthy of notice that in no department of education has greater progress been made during the last ten years than in that of domestic science, which teaches the true principles of household management as related to health and income.

The following extract from the report of the Superintendent of Schools in Philadelphia may give an idea of its growth in that City: "The teaching of cooking in the public schools . . . began experimentally in 1887." The experiment was watched carefully by all interested, and by the close of the term in June, 1888, the Board of Public Education became satisfied not only of the value of the instruction, but also of the practicability of måking it a branch of the curriculum of the schools.

The Board therefore assumed the responsibility of the instruction in the girls' High Schools, and elected a permanent teacher. In 1889, owing to the increased number of pupils attending the school, it was found necessary to furnish another kitchen and a second teacher was employed.

The result of the instruction in the girls' High School was so satisfactory that in 1888 a school kitchen was opened experimentally for girls of the higher grades of the public schools. This also proved successful and in the Autumn of 1889 the first permanent cooking centre for grammar schools (occupying the same place as the senior grades of public schools in Ontario) was established . . . In 1891 a second school kitchen was opened, and at present writing, 1897, there are eight cooking centres under the control of the Board of Education. " The pupils are taken from classes of the sixth school year. The time required for the course of lessons averages two and a half hours per week from October to June. The system gives each teacher of cooking ten classes a week, and one school kitchen can accommodate 250 pupils."

"The eight schools accommodate 2,000 pupils, and as there are over 4,000 sixth-year pupils in the grammar grades it is seen that it cannot be made compulsory (as in Washington) until facilities are largely increased."

"The interest manifested by the girls and parents, and by the large number of progressive teachers, shows how highly the instruction has been appreciated. It is expected that before long, additional school kitchens will be furnished in convenient localities, and accommodation provided for all grammar school pupils of the proper age." It is worthy of note that in every case where domestic science was introduced first into High Schools, it was afterwards found advisable to provide the primary training in the Public Elementary Schools. Consequently in planning a system for the schools of Ontario it will be well to remember this fact, and benefit by the experience of others.

In summing up the general evidence given in connection with these investigations, and which has been the result of actual experience, the following may be accepted as the benefit to be derived from the introduction of these practical subjects into the public school curriculum:

1. It tends to inspire respect for skilled labor, and domestic duties.
2. It develops self-respect and self-reliance, especially in pupils who dislike books.
3. It develops general intelligence and increases interest in school work.
4. It cultivates habits of neatness, *attention*, accuracy and industry.
5. It improves the health and strengthens the will power.

As the chief objections to the introduction of these subjects into the Public School System of Ontario are—1st, overcrowded curriculum; 2nd, expense; it may be well to submit evidence concerning such important points. N. B. Powell, Superintendent of the Washington Schools says, in reference to the effect of such instruction upon the other studies:—"I feel very sure that the unbiassed testimony of all connected with the public schools of Washington is that our academic work has been substantially and perceptibly improved and made more agreeable to the pupils by virtue of the co-related manual of exercises. The result has been health-giving and has changed the attitude of children's minds toward the subject of education."

Instead of these subjects overcrowding the curriculum, they are made to serve as new methods for conveying knowledge, as already stated, by co-relating the subjects taught in the schools. It has not been found necessary in a single instance to reduce the number of subjects. In many cases through the interest awakened in these classes, dull pupils have made marked progress in their other school work.

Dr. MacAlister, for many years superintendent of schools in Philadelphia, now President of Drexel Institute, says:—"The thing which must be kept constantly in mind is that the new studies are not simply annexed to the existing curriculum, but are to be worked into it as an integral part of the general education given in the schools." Therefore, it must be remembered that the introduction of such practical subjects as cooking and sewing should not be considered as an additional mental tax, but rather as mental recreation while developing other faculties.

Expense.

An exaggerated idea is usually entertained concerning the expense of such instruction. There are two points of view from which it is well to consider this question. 1st. The relative value of these subjects as they affect the general principles of education; 2nd. The economic value of such instruction. The returns have been so sure and satisfactory in every case where such training has been provided, that the matter of expense has become of minor importance. No objections have been raised by ratepayers after a fair trial of the system. As domestic science has been successfully introduced into the public schools of Halifax and Montreal, a fair estimate of the expense may be taken from reports received from these two cities. The cost of furnishing a class room varies from $200 to $300. Teachers' salaries vary from $500 to $600 per annum; $100 a year is allowed for materials and $100 for extras, such as fuel, etc. The pupils are taught the care of utensils, therefore very little annual outlay is necessary for replenishing the class-room. Each school kitchen accommodates from 200 to 250 pupils, taken from the senior grades. The most satisfactory age for such instruction is from 12 to 15 years. The pupils from the various schools attend these classes one-half day or 2½ hours each week. The system adopted in Halifax and Montreal is practically the same as that of Washington, Boston, Philadelphia, and other cities throughout the United States.

From this general summary of the practice and principles of teaching domestic science, the possibility of incorporating such instruction with the regular school work will be clearly seen.

There is no part of a girl's education which is so likely to produce a permanent effect or to exercise a better influence than an intelligent study of domestic science, which gives a practical knowledge of the essential principles underlying true home making.

ADELAIDE HOODLESS.

Hamilton, March 10th, 1899.